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**Theodore Parker.**  
**1810-1860.**

THE STORY  
OF  
THEODORE PARKER

BY

FRANCES E. COOKE

AUTHOR OF 'STORY OF THE FOUNDING,' 'EMERSON'S LIVES,'

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION  
'AN AMERICAN HERO,' ETC.

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So close is glory to our dust—  
So near is God to man—  
When duty whispers low, 'Thou must,'  
The youth replies, 'I can.'

EMERSON.

*Second Edition.*

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## PREFACE.

—:O:—

SOME of the heresies of one age become the gospel of the next, and we are apt to accept truth, which we find ready to our hand, almost without a thought of the great men who in former years have suffered and fought in its defence.

The story of Theodore Parker is little known to young people. Yet the memory of one whose reverence was so deep for the essential basis of religion should never die away; and no nobler example can be found in modern times of faithfulness to conscience.

F. E. C.





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# THE STORY OF THEODORE PARKER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE OLD HOME.

THE village of Lexington lies ten miles away from Boston, in the American State of Massachusetts, and near Lexington, not many years ago, stood a house, among the meadows, which was more than a century old. The doorsteps were worn by the tread of many feet, and old-fashioned latticed windows let air and sunshine into the low-roofed rooms. Pine trees shaded the house from the hot summer's sun; and in the background a wooded hill sheltered it from some of the winter's colder




winds. Close at hand grew an orchard full of peach trees ; while in front of the dwelling lay a little field, through which a narrow path led down to the wide meadows. Beyond the meadows, far as eye could see, stretched a valley bounded by low hills, and watered by a merry brook which flowed into the river Charles on its way to the distant sea.

What a valley that was ! In summer, rich with soft mosses and blue gentians ; in spring, with violets and tender anemones ; in winter, white and dreary with deep snow-drifts ; no living green to be seen but that of the great pine-trees, bent and battered under the stormy winds.

In the old house lived a millwright, with his wife, his aged mother, and a large family of children. He was a hard-working, somewhat silent man ; but he was known as a tender husband and father, a good son, and a faithful friend. All his neighbours respected him. He had lived among them for years, and his honest, sober way of life was so unlike that of many men who lived in Lexington, that it was a common saying in the village, ' John Parker has all the manners in the neighbourhood.'

For this reason the millwright was often asked to settle disputes among the people of the village; and because he was known to be so honest and trusty, dying men sometimes found comfort in leaving John Parker as guardian to their orphan children. He was a hard-working man too. Most of the day he might be found in the workshop at the back of the house making wheels, and barrows, and tubs. In the evening, when the day's work was done, he used to sit with his family in the old-fashioned kitchen. There he read, sometimes aloud, while his wife and daughters sewed and knitted, and the old grandmother nodded in her easy chair by the fire. When the clock struck eight, he used to send the young ones to rest with a wave of his hand; and before very long all the inmates of the house were fast asleep—for they were quiet people, with very simple, peaceful ways of life.

Thus one day passed away much like another and it was very rarely that any of the family wandered out into the world beyond the blue 'Milton hills' that bounded the valley where their home lay. But books gave them knowledge, if they gained none from travel, and these



John Parker used to borrow from the village library. For in those days Lexington had three public buildings—a library, a church, and a school-house. Very few volumes made up the wealth this library owned. About twelve new books, it is said, were added each year; yet to men living like the millwright, ten miles away from the nearest town, even the small store of a village library was worth much.

A farm lay near the old house, and John Parker's 'boys' used to work upon this farm. It was only a small place and paid badly. The Parkers were poor people, so all their work must be done by their own hands. The girls helped their mother, and she was always to be found busy about the house, unless some neighbour was ill or in trouble and needed her help. Like her husband, Mrs. Parker was well known and loved in the village. Sometimes people wondered to find her so wise a woman, and her advice always so good; for she had little time to read, and she worked as hard as the poorest of her neighbours, though she was by no means a strong woman. The fact was, Mrs. Parker's wisdom did not come from *books*. She *thought* as she went about her work, and her loving

heart and firm trust in God made clear to her mind questions which were puzzles to people less faithful than herself. Her children believed, however, that no one knew so many wonderful wild stories of the Indians, or beautiful old ballads as their mother did. Her memory was good, and richly stored with legends and tales she had known and loved when she was a child herself. So fables, hymns, texts, and good thoughts of her own were, any and all of them, ready to help and cheer when they were wanted.

One August day in the year 1810, a new baby was born in John Parker's house, and the hearts of all the ten children were full of joy. Even the youngest little sister, five years of age, was old enough to welcome the little brother heartily, and by one consent he was named Theodore, or the 'gift of God.' He found many nurses and playfellows awaiting him, all ready to watch over and help him to grow happy and strong. Long after he could run alone, Mrs. Parker used to call him her baby; and every day, under his mother's loving influence, the boy learned without knowing it himself, to grow into good thoughts

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and habits, and into a strong and earnest faith.

‘Mrs. Parker, you’re spiling that boy of yours,’ people sometimes used to say as a friendly warning, when they saw the little fellow so often sitting at his mother’s feet or running by her side; ‘he never can take care of himself when he grows up.’ But Mrs. Parker knew better than this. The knowledge of his mother’s love made the boy sure of the guardian care of God about which she told him, and before he was three years old he was brave and fearless.

In summer time he used to wander alone over the farm and fields, making friends with the birds and flowers. He loved to lie on the soft grass, watching the sunshine and the shadows made by the floating clouds, and drinking in the sweet-scented breeze. In winter he rushed about among the thick snow-drifts that lay heaped up by the fierce winds; or he played in the workshop and among the cows and horses in the barn. But always he loved the summer sights and sounds the best. As he grew older, father, mother, brothers and sisters were at hand to teach this little new

comer, less wise than themselves, the meaning of the sights he saw about him on the fair face of earth, and help him to learn the book of Nature for himself.

One summer day, as Theodore was rambling about the farm in the bright sunshine, he stopped by the side of a pond to look at a lovely red flower growing on a plant in the moist soil at the water's edge. Beneath the sheltering leaves of the plant lay a spotted tortoise. Without a thought of the pain his act would give, the little fellow raised the stick which he held in his hand to strike the sleeping tortoise and make it wake and move. Suddenly, with the upraised stick still in the air, he seemed to hear a voice within him say clearly, 'It is wrong.'

Down dropped the stick, and away trotted Theodore back over the fields to find his mother, and ask her whence came the warning words he had just heard. Mrs. Parker lifted the breathless little lad on her knee, and listened to his eager tale. When it was ended with her eyes wet with tears, she said, 'That voice that you have heard some men call conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God

in the soul of man. If you listen to it and obey it, it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear and disobey, then it will fade out little by little and leave you all in the dark. Your life depends on your heeding this little voice.'

From that day, though he was so young, the thought that he must listen to God's voice within him became a part of his daily life, and, like the thought of his mother's love, went everywhere with him. Like his brothers and sisters, he said a hymn and prayer each night; but the good thoughts did not end there. All through the day he learned to listen for the tiny whisper of conscience that never failed to tell him what was right or wrong; and so it came to pass that people knew that if Theodore Parker said a thing, that thing *must* be true.

While still quite a small boy, like all the busy people about him, Theodore learned to work. His life, even when a child, was not to be all play in the sunny meadows and the sheltered barn. He carried into the house chips and broken branches for the fires, drove the quiet cows to pasture, and carried grain to the oxen in their stalls. He waited also on

the old grandmother at her meals; for this old lady lived most of her time in a little parlour upstairs, and when the older people were tired with their hard day's work, the active little grandson was always ready to run her errands and supply her wants.

A mile from Mr. Parker's house, along the country road, stood a small school-house close to the village. When he was six years old, Theodore was sent to this school every day for two years. After that time, until he was sixteen, he only went for twelve weeks in each year. The nicest and shortest way to the school lay across the fields; but a brook flowed through them, and the small boy had no good fairy ready to carry him across. With much labour he rolled some heavy stones into the brook, and crossed safely thus four times a day, with no help but that of his own hard-working little hands and feet.

A mistress, known by the name of 'Aunt Pattie,' taught the little children in the day-school. At first all that happened there was new and astonishing to the young scholar from the farm-house. For a week a pretty little girl was among the children. She was called



Narcissa, and Theodore looked upon her as a dainty flower, or as one of the fairies that his mother's fables told about. He could not learn his lessons as he gazed at her pretty face and golden hair, and out of school he walked round her slowly full of wonder, and was ready to do great deeds to help her or defend her from harm.

One morning, as he was crossing the fields on his way to school, he met an old man with a long grey beard. The stranger turned back to walk with the little school-boy, who had such a merry, and at the same time, such an earnest face; and he spent the time they were together in telling Theodore of the clever man he might become if he tried, and of all he might do and be in later life. As they neared the school-house the old man went away, and Theodore never saw him again: but he did not forget the stranger's words. Again and again they came back to the boy's memory, and the wish grew strong in him to become what he had been told he had the power to be.

'Aunt Pattie' left the school, and a master took her place. He was a poor teacher, and not at all the kind of man to gain any influence

over the rough boys among his scholars. Even little Parker played a prank one day, which he would never have played if the master had been in earnest in his work. A quill popgun had been given to Theodore by one of his brothers. He took it to school one morning loaded with potato, and let it off with a loud pop, which made both master and scholars jump up in wonder. The plaything was burnt, and the boy deserved to lose it. But that was the only time when his love of fun led him to give so bad an example to the school. He kept his merry ways for the playground, where he became the leader in all the games.

Sometimes, perhaps, he was rough in play: but he never bullied nor teased a schoolfellow, and always would see justice and fair play done wherever he was. The boys liked to follow such a brave, worthy leader in their play; and they had no better leader in their work. His home lessons were always well learned, however many tasks he had: and, with the exception of a girl who was as hard-working as himself, Theodore was always at the head of the school.

In course of time the school examination

was held. The small school-house was filled with scholars and their friends. The millwright, John Parker, was there, and all the School Committee. Little Theodore Parker was always ready with an answer to the examiner's questions.

'Who is that fine boy who spoke up so well?' said some one to John Parker, when the examination was over. Theodore heard the question asked, and he heard his father answer, with a smiling face, 'That is one of my boys—the youngest.' It made his heart glad to see his father look so proud and happy; and he thought once more, as he had often thought before, that he would try with all his might and main as he grew older to be and do the very wisest and best he could.





## CHAPTER II.

### THE FARMER'S BOY.

A COUNTRY boy leaving school when he was eight years old! Theodore Parker was this boy. How could he ever hope to become a great man? We shall see how he managed to carry out his wish, for 'where there's a will there's a way.'

In summer a great deal of work could be done on Mr. Parker's farm even by a small boy; and sometimes *this* small boy tried to do work much too heavy for his strength. One day he was helping to lay a new wall. Great, heavy stones were wanted to build with, and one after another he lifted them and carried them to the place, never caring when his back ached and he felt faint and tired. He was brave and full of spirit; but not quite wise

enough to know when he harmed himself by overtasking his strength; and the strain of that day's work he often felt in future years.

One sunny day the peaches on the orchard trees were ripe, and ready to be gathered. Theodore's father and brothers were all busy in the workshops and on the farm. No one could be spared to take the precious fruit to market at Boston, ten miles away. What was to be done? The fruit would spoil, and the money they had hoped to gain by its sale would be lost. To the surprise of all, up sprang the little lad, always ready to help, and cried out, 'Send me! I will sell the fruit at Boston!' And the older people knew they could trust him to be careful, and do the errand well.

Next morning the family waited at the farm-yard gate to see Theodore, and a companion as young as himself, set off on their way to Boston. Father, mother, sisters, and brothers—we can fancy them standing there; some anxious, some laughing; and all waving their farewells as the rosy-faced little driver takes the reins, and pats the horse that is to draw the cart-full of baskets of ripe fruit. On the

journey to town no one could lead him to play, or to be careless about his charge ; and at the market no one would try to cheat the honest-looking little fellow, who was so anxious to sell his fruit, and so careful to give just weight to every buyer. He was very happy when he brought home the well-earned money and the empty cart at night. It was the best thing in the world to him to have been trusted and useful.

As Theodore grew older, of course he was able to do still more work on the farm. There was not much variety in his life each day ; but great pleasure came to him in little ways. A piece of work ended, and well done, made him happy ; and the sight of a red sunset sky, and the green, bursting buds in spring, made him ready to sing with joy. He liked to watch the growth of a plant, or to study the ways of the animals on the farm. Indeed, he made friends of the cattle, just as he had done when, only a small boy, he played among them in the barns in wintry weather. He never thought them stupid because he could not read their thoughts ; and, by watching them, he learned to understand their habits and ways, and even

to fancy he could interpret their dealings with each other. Very often the stories he told of his dumb friends made the family circle merry : but never did he fancy anything about them that could waken any thoughts in human minds but those of love and pity.

Thus he found many new objects to interest him. Yet they were what some people would call 'common things.' If he asked the country people about him questions as to the reason or history of anything that he saw, they often answered, 'I dunno ;' but such answers only made him think the more, and so he went on learning every day.

Each winter for three months there was little farm work to be done. Then Theodore could go to school again. So through fierce snow-storms and biting winds he crossed the fields each day, and was always the best scholar in the Lexington school-house. When spring came, and he had to go back to work, the schoolmaster offered to lend him books that he might study whenever he could. This schoolmaster's name was White, and he was a very different man from the poor teacher who took Aunt Pattie's place a few years

before. Theodore owed him much, and never forgot the debt. Dearly he loved the memory of his friend in later years; and it was one of the happiest deeds of his life then, to be able to help the orphan children of the man who had influenced his own boyhood so greatly.

So in spring days the farm boy, as he guided the plough, said over to himself the lessons he had learned during the winter months at school; and when other workers lay sleeping during dinner time under the shade of the trees, he read page after page of his schoolmaster's books and learned new lessons. No odd moments were wasted. Early in the summer morning, and when work was done at night, Theodore found time to read, and his father often marvelled at the number of books he knew all about, of which he could give a clear account when asked.

But there was one book he could not borrow; and this book he must have. It was a Latin dictionary. In some way he must get together money enough to buy it. But he would not ask his hard-working father for the money. What could he do? A bright thought came into his mind. Ripe whortleberries hung upon



the bushes in the fields. These he might gather and sell, if he could only find time to do so. So very early in the morning, before the sun had fairly risen, and while the heavy dew lay upon the grass and hedgerows, he sprang out of bed and was out in the meadows while other people still lay resting after the hard work of the previous day.

In this way, Theodore gathered many baskets of whortleberries, ready for Boston market, and yet he was able to begin his day's work when his fellow-workers came out on the farm. That Latin dictionary, when he got it, was a precious book to him. It was the first book he had earned for himself, and the first book of the large library which he afterwards gathered round him by degrees. Those hard-working days were very happy days to look back upon in later life, and while they lasted there was no happier boy in all that countryside than the youngest son of the millwright of Lexington.

One winter the young people of the village planned together to make the long, cold evenings merry by dancing. But farm boys and country girls did not know how to dance, and

must first be taught. The older people, their fathers and mothers, glad to give them pleasure, hired a teacher for them, and paid him for all the pupils he taught. Theodore's father was ready to join with the other farmers near Lexington in this plan, and Theodore had quite enough love of fun to enjoy all the merry times that would have followed for him if he had learned to dance. But he loved something else more than he loved fun; and with the money with which he might have learned to dance, he asked his father to send him for a few weeks to the new Academy which had been opened in Lexington, and which was a much better school than the little village school he had been used to go to. In the Academy for those few weeks he worked at Latin and Greek and Algebra; and while his young companions danced and made merry at night, he sat at home with his much-loved books.

Now, perhaps it may seem as if Theodore Parker must have been rather a dull playfellow, and as if the country boys and girls about Lexington would not regret his absence from their sports. But this was not the case. He

was a favourite everywhere. His merry laugh made the farm-house cheerful, and lightened the cares of the millwright and his wife. This youngest boy was very dear to all his brothers and sisters, and one and all they were certain that he would grow up no common man. But far better than his merry ways, which every one liked, was the knowledge that he might always be trusted, and that still, just as when he was a younger boy, if Theodore Parker said a thing that thing *must* be true.

Year after year passed away, each one spent by him much as the last had been. In 1827 he was seventeen years old. Then came a change. That winter he became what was called a 'winter schoolmaster,' and earned money by teaching a school just when there was little work to be done on the farm. He earned in this way enough money to pay for his board, and to hire a labourer to do anything on the farm that might have fallen to his lot if he had stayed at home; and while he taught he still found time to read, and, best of all, to think.

At last came the time when he must settle what his future work in life as a man should

be. Not that of a millwright or farmer. So all his friends were certain. When a boy, he used to think he should like best to be a preacher; he should like in this way to help to make the world a better and a wiser place. Now, as a young man, he still thought a preacher's work was the best kind of work. But his friends said sermons were dull, and churches were always half empty, and though preachers might be good men, yet they seldom made any mark in the world.

So some people proposed one plan, and some another. Meanwhile, he thought the matter over, and as he did the daily duties that came in his way, his future prospects also became clear. He had no doubt that the fancy of his boyhood had been no mistake. He would become a preacher of all that seemed to him to be true and right; and, whatever other men might do or say, he would try to practise what he preached, that his life might help on the world as well as his words. This he would do, and leave results to God.

But now came another puzzle. Before he could teach other men he must learn much

more himself, and his father was too poor to send him to college and pay the college fees. Well, summer came, and in the year 1830 he was at home again working on the farm as before, ploughing and digging, and mending wheels and waggons, reading at odd moments, and thinking as he went about his work.

One sunny day in August he asked his father to give him a holiday on the morrow. Early in the morning when the rising sun was just beginning to chase the shadows from the earth, he set out from the farm. It was a new thing for Theodore to want a holiday, and every one wondered what he was going to do with it; but they knew that sooner or later he would tell them all about it; so they asked no questions, and were content to wait.

While the usual morning's work went on at the farm, he was walking along the dusty road to Boston; and, before the great heat of the day had come, he had reached the city. His journey was not yet at an end, however. A little way beyond Boston stood a cluster of great buildings. This was Harvard University. Here the tired traveller left the high-road;

and making his way up through the grounds to an entrance door in one of the buildings, he went in when it was opened in answer to his knock. More than fifty years have passed since Theodore Parker took his holiday on that sunny August day ; but still Harvard University is standing near Boston and it is more famous in these days than it was in his time. Thither young men went, as they do now, to study and be trained for useful work in the world. But first a hard examination must be passed and then must follow two or three years of study.

What made Theodore Parker come out again later in the day with such a joyful look upon his face? He had found out the worth of his few years of study in the village school, and of his self-teaching and thought in the winter evenings, and behind the plough. That morning he, the farm-boy, with his few chances, had passed the hard examination ; There was the first step in his new path of life ; other steps must follow.

Back along the dusty high road in the fading evening light, but with a happier heart than when he had walked along it in the bright

morning sunshine to Boston. He entered the farm-house door, and ran upstairs to the room where his old father, tired with the day's work, had gone to rest.

'Father,' he said, 'I have passed the examination and entered Harvard College to-day.'

The old man was amazed. After a little time, he replied sadly,—

'But, Theodore, I cannot afford to keep you there.'

'No, father,' said the light-hearted youth, 'I'm going to stay at home and read, and still keep up with my class.'

So Theodore Parker's holiday ended. Before long, hard work and brave days began for him in a new life.





## CHAPTER III.

### UNKNOWN WORKERS.

**I**T was no easy course that Theodore had planned for himself. He had only passed the first college examination so far; others would follow, and as he had no money he meant to read at home and make ready for them. In the end must come some college fees. How was he to find money to pay them? At first he worked on the farm just as he had been used to do, and read at all the odd moments he could find; but these odd moments were rare, and now that he knew what the work and his future life must be he must press on.

In twelve months' time he agreed to become a teacher in a Boston school. In such a life he would have more chance to study than on the farm, and some of the money he earned



could go to pay a labourer in his place. The day came when he must leave the old home where he had lived for twenty-one years. How dear every place was to him! Each nook in the fields was filled with happy memories, and he loved every room in the old house. Now he must leave it all, and his heart clung fondly to the friends with whom he had so far spent his life.

When the spring buds were bursting into leaf and flower, Theodore said good-bye to all and went out into the world. He was only an awkward-looking country lad, in rough farming garments, and he set out for his city life with a few more clothes and two or three books in one wooden trunk. There was nothing wonderful in his look or manner; no promise of future greatness to be seen in him; but he left heavy, aching hearts behind, for father, mother, brothers and sisters all knew what he had been to them in his own home. It was a hard parting, but it must take place, and all knew it was for the best. So they watched him down the long country road, as they had watched him when a little lad he went to sell the peaches in Boston market; and at length the winding hedgerows hid him from their straining eyes.

No bright life awaited him at Boston. He loved work, and truly he found enough there, with six hours' teaching and ten or twelve hours' study every day. But sad longings for home and friends used to visit him in his lonely lodging, and he pined in his new life for some one to love and care for. It seemed to him that more than anything else he cared for love; not so much to be loved, as for some object on which his great tender heart could pour itself forth. He had had so many dear ones at home, and in this great city of Boston he was alone among strangers. In those days he took little sleep and seldom any exercise. Often he did not himself know the lessons he had to teach; and through the quiet hours of the night he kept himself awake to study, and he wanted no rest from his toil. One aim was always before him—to prepare for his future work.

On Sundays he went to a crowded church in the city. How different from the quiet little village church at home, to which he used to walk through the meadows with dear friends and old companions. In this city church he heard hard doctrines preached—threats

of an angry judge, and of future misery if men did not believe an appointed creed. To himself he said, that if ever he became a preacher people should hear from him of a tender Father, and of the need for a holy loving life, instead of belief in a creed.

Day after day he went on working bravely until months passed, and still he saw no prospect beyond his daily teaching in the school, and knew that the little money he earned in this way would never take him to college. But God helps those who help themselves, and suddenly a new way opened out to him. Not many miles from Boston lies the village of Watertown. A school was needed there, and Theodore was asked to open one there himself. He gladly agreed to do so, and before long went to Watertown to make ready.

A short way from the village of Watertown stood an old disused bakehouse. Before its door lay broad green fields, and round about its walls sheltering trees waved their branches in the gentle breezes, and made a home for many a bird whose songs filled the old empty house with music. Rather a tumble-down building it was ; still, there Theodore meant to

open his school; so he hired it, and then set to work to saw planks and join them together for forms and desks. This done after many days' work, he swept out the room and lighted the fire and began his school with two scholars. But he put his whole heart into this work as into all he did, and boys and girls could not help learning when he was their teacher. Before long he had fifty-four children in his school.

Now he had no longer a sad longing for some one to love and care for. Poor as he was, he could help those who were poorer than himself, and he never turned a child from his school-door because no fee was brought. He even searched the village for children who were too poor to pay. He taught and helped them all alike, and they learned to love him so heartily that their happiest hours were those they spent with him. Sometimes he took them long rambles in the fields and woods, and then the best lessons they learned were not from printed pages; for he found for them 'sermons in stones and books in the running brooks.' Above all he taught them more by what he was himself than by his

words. Boys and girls who knew Theodore Parker grew true and earnest, because they felt him to be so, and longed to be like him. Even idle scholars laid aside their idleness, and made no complaints of the hard tasks he asked from them, lest they should disappoint the hopes he had formed of them.

Now all this time, while he was training his young scholars, he himself was growing. The story of his life would be of little use to us if it told us of a man who had no battles to fight and no mistakes to learn from. The grand thing about him was that he was always in earnest and always tried to do the duty that lay nearest and seemed the clearest. Therefore clearer and clearer did the light shine upon his duties as the years went on, and nobler and better grew his life.

One day a coloured girl came to the school-house door and asked to be taught. Theodore cared nothing for outside appearance, the colour of the skin or the fit of the clothes mattered not to him. He saw this girl had the will to learn and he took her in at once. Next morning he was surprised to hear from many parents of his scholars that their children

must leave his school if the black girl were not sent away at once.

A few years later Theodore Parker would have seen a great principle here to which he must be true. He would have kept and taught the coloured girl, even though he had ruined his school. *Now* in his earnestness he only saw the work to which he had given himself up. He must make a good school-master, and he must earn money to take him to college in the future. Sorrowfully he sent the child away. In a few years he was ready to give up home and life to defend one such coloured girl as had come to his school-door in Watertown. This is one instance of the way in which this American farmer's boy grew wiser. He always tried to do what he thought right ; but, by degrees, fresh light came to him and he saw new duties to be done, and wider ways of helping the world than he had seen before.

Now just at this time there came to Boston an unknown youth, a stranger such as Theodore himself had been, and something of his story must be told, for, in course of time, his influence acted on Theodore Parker, and helped to lead him into fresh paths of life and work.

Twenty-five years before, there had lived in the little town of Newbury Port a brave sea captain named Garrison, with his wife. Newbury Port was built beside the sea-coast, and the great waves of the Atlantic Ocean came dashing up in spray and foam upon the cliffs, and the stormy winds roared round the town when the captain's boat was far away out at sea. But the captain's wife was as brave as himself. She was a good woman, and her faith was strong. So when the storms were fierce she only prayed the more, and knew that all was right.

Now these people were very poor and they apprenticed one of their boys to a trade when he was so little that he could hardly hold the tools he had to use. At first he was with a shoemaker. But in the end they sent him to a printer, and he learned to set type, and the printer's office served him for both school and college that richer boys attend. By-and-by he began to write articles for the paper his master published, and surprised him by the knowledge shown by a boy thus self-taught.

A few years passed and the boy became a youth. Both his parents were dead. Then, in

a town among the distant 'Green mountains' in Vermont, he set on foot a paper of his own. For this paper he had always one aim in view. Through its means he wanted to spread a love of temperance among the people who read it, for he had found out what sad homes and ruined lives a love of drink caused among men. So this was the purpose of his life at that time, and he worked for it with all his might.

Now, a strange-looking old man used to travel on foot at that time through Vermont and other States of America, with a heavy pack of papers on his back, day after day selling copies of the paper which he published himself by the help of money collected as he walked. But this paper had a different aim from that of Garrison. Long years ago, when a boy, he had been shocked by the dreadful sight of slaves torn from their friends and driven in chains to be sold to new slavery down the river Ohio. Benjamin Lundy, as the boy was called, never afterwards forgot this first sight of the cruelties of slavery. As he grew older he learned more about it, and he vowed to spend his life in doing all he could to make America a free country.

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So here were two men, a young man and an old one, each trying to mend the world in different ways by the papers that they wrote. Before long these two men were to meet and join together in a common cause. For Benjamin Lundy heard one day of young Garrison working so hard with his printing press among the Green mountains of Vermont; and he set off on a long tramp over hill and dale with his pack on his back to beg the youth to help him to fight against the great crime of slavery which filled their native land with wrong.

The young man agreed to the old man's wish. He left the old cause and took up the new one; and truly in great earnest was William Lloyd Garrison. The spirit of his father, the brave old sea captain, filled him, and right into the heart of the slave states he went, and printed and published his anti-slavery paper. Then, it is said, he wakened the land with his bold words and his warning cry that slavery must end *at once*. Thoughtless people could no longer help asking themselves whether slavery were right or wrong. He wakened the slave owners, too, who on some pretext seized

him and threw him into prison for his brave outspoken words.

For weeks Garrison lay in prison. At length a New York merchant paid his fine and set him free. Then, knowing there was no chance to be heard in the slave states any more, he went to Boston, just about the time when Theodore Parker left his father's house to begin his work in the world. In a small gloomy garret, with a negro boy to help him, living on bread and water, and unknown in Boston, Garrison set on foot a new paper called the *Liberator*, which was to make the Northern people, who bought and spun the slave-grown cotton, learn that to keep slaves was a crime. Again and again he said to himself, 'I am in earnest. I will not retreat an inch. I *will* be heard.'

Was not this a man after Theodore Parker's own heart? Both were living heartily for the duty nearest to them, and the work that must be done. But as yet they had not met.

Meanwhile, there lived in Watertown a minister named Dr. Francis. The Charles river flowed by his pretty home, and a garden

gay with flowers lay round the house. Dr. Francis was a lover of books, and his wife was a lover of flowers, and they were never at ease and happy unless they were on the watch to find some one whom they could help. They heard of the hard-working young school-master, Theodore Parker, who wanted to go to college, and they asked him to their house. Fresh interests now opened out to him. He went to Dr. Francis's church, and taught in his Sunday school, and soon a bright hope dawned upon him. For he learned to know and love a young girl named Lydia Cabot, who afterwards became his wife. Often he gathered wild flowers for her by the river's bank, and as he walked alone, dreams mingled with the music of the rushing waters of a home that they might sometime make together.

It was a joyful day when he first found that Lydia cared for him, and he went back to the old farm-house at Lexington to tell his friends there his good news. Life began to seem very rich to him, for his new love brightened all his works and ways. Still he worked as hard as ever to prepare for the college examination, and often the early morning light broke and found

him still reading, as he had read through the long sleepless night.

There is a story told of a countryman far away in the Black Forest, who once spent many years in carving a grand statue out of hard pine wood. Many hindrances came in his way, knots in the wood and disappointments in his tools. But at last the work was done, and he looked upon a perfect image before he died. This story tells of another kind of carver, of a boy who vowed to himself to carve out a noble character before he died. Like a block of pine wood lay his life before him, and we have seen him carve some deep hard strokes already. We shall see what kind of a character he had carved out for himself by the time death came.





## CHAPTER IV.

### BARNSTABLE AND WEST ROXBURY.

ONE morning there was great excitement among the children in Theodore Parker's school-house. Heads were bent together over the desks, and never before had there been low whispers over the books. Something was plainly the matter, and it was plain, also, that the young master saw all that went on and took no notice. The morning wore away and the school broke up. Then the mystery was explained. Because it was the last day on which he should teach his school, the children had got ready a parting present to give him—a silver cup—and the eldest boy was to present it and to act as spokesman for the rest. For two years Theodore had been their master, and it was no easy matter for any of them to say

good-bye to him, or for him to say good-bye to them. In fact, when the great moment came, and the silver cup was given, and the little speech made, master and children alike burst into tears.

At length the time had come when he had earned enough money, thanks to the hard life and ceaseless work, to enter Harvard College. There he could still live on the plainest food, and still go on teaching until he had passed the last examination and was ready for his new work in life. So, for two years and three months, he went to Harvard, and quickly did the time pass away. Well might his friends be proud of the hard-working student, who had made his own way to college, and now took such a high place among his college companions. He was a wonder to many who saw him living on poor food and giving himself no holidays from the tasks he undertook. In the hottest summer day no tempting country walk won him from his books, and when other men amused themselves, he gave lessons to help to pay his college fees, or sometimes went to the great prison near Boston to teach the prisoners confined within its wall.

Yet he was always ready at odd times for a talk with other students, and his merry laugh and genial ways made him a favourite with every one. At Harvard the students used to meet together for debates. Then they chose a subject, and made speeches upon it. How was it, they wondered, that the new student, Theodore Parker, who at first seemed so shy, was soon the best scholar of them all? The reason was that he never stopped to think, as some of the others did, which argument would sound best or be most liked. He spoke always straight out of his heart just what he knew was true and right. Therefore his words carried weight with them. In everything he said and did, he never forgot the lesson learned so many years before by the pond where the sleeping tortoise lay, and always he listened for the gentle whisper of conscience as his guide.

When the time came for him to leave Harvard, and he was ready for new work, he only waited a call to some church to be its preacher. Meanwhile, as he waited, he took a short holiday among his friends. One Sunday, he preached for the first time in the vil-

lage church near his old home at Lexington. The country people, who had known him as a boy, gathered together to listen to him, and his heart was glad when he met his old companions again. They were all proud of his success, and to know that his work so far had ended well. To some of them it seemed that now he had left college his hardest days were over. To himself, however, it seemed that life's work was only beginning, and to himself he said, 'Blessed be these iron times in which there is something for a man to do, something for a man to think. I have sterner deeds to do, greater dangers to bear. I must be about my work.'

And so, in the midst of holiday time, while enjoying friends and sunshine and flowers, he still longed for work, and often thought, 'I must have something to *do*. I must be about new work.'

On the sea-coast of the State of Massachusetts, a small village called Barnstable was growing up at this time. The village road wound among little wooden houses brightly painted green, red, yellow, and white. Behind the village rose a steep rough hill, and in front



lay the wild bay on which the hardy fishermen sailed out in all weathers to make a living for their families. In 1836, just when Theodore was leaving Harvard, the people of Barnstable wanted a minister, and they asked him to come and fill their pulpit for a month.

He agreed to do so, and one evening reached the bright-looking village and looked over the bay far out towards the distant, shining sea. He liked the place at once; but it seemed to him that the fishing people were too reserved and shy. They had not much to say to him, and even on Sundays in the little church he fancied that their hymns and prayers were cold and dull. But by degrees he grew more used to the ways of the people of Barnstable, and they learned to trust him and to feel at home with him. First of all, he made friends, as in old times, of the animals about the place. He liked to climb the hill, too, and to wander among the fields. Then one after another he found friends among the men and women in their village homes, and learned to honour them for their patience in their trouble, and for their faithful hard-working lives.

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One day news came to Barnstable that a strange sight was to be seen in the woods across the bay. Theodore Parker, with one of his friends, set sail in a small vessel to make a visit to the woods. His boat was cast upon a sand-bank near the shore to which it was bound. Leaving it there, the two men made their way up to the woods, which gave a cool and pleasant shadow from the heat and the mid-day sun. Quiet and restful places did they look from the shore. But as the travellers from Barnstable came nearer to them the sound of many voices reached them from among the trees ; and there, when the under-wood was passed, they reached a grassy glade where sixteen large tents were pitched round a rough, hastily-built pulpit. Behind the tents horses and oxen were tied to the trunks of trees, and strange-looking carts and carriages were to be seen, while the whole glade was filled with people who had met together to hold a 'camp-meeting,' as a church held in the open air was called.

Theodore and his friend listened as one preacher after another gave a sermon to the crowd. Loud hymns were sung, and through

the long prayers the people shouted and wept, and even laughed in their excitement, and hoped to hear the 'still, small voice of God' in answer to their noisy calls. Theodore thought of his quiet fishing people at Barnstable, whom he had once fancied cold and dull. He pictured them doing their duty fearlessly on the rough sea, and finding the Lord in their work at home, and in their humble prayers and hymns. Their worship seemed to him much holier than that of this 'multitude that kept holiday,' and he thought much about them as he walked home to Barnstable along the lonely road for thirty miles under the quiet starlit sky.

Quickly the days passed by, and the month he was to spend at Barnstable came to an end. The fishermen would gladly have kept their new preacher with them always; but though he had made many friends among them, Barnstable was not the kind of place in which he wished to spend his life. So he took leave of the people and wandered forth again, preaching first in one place, then in another, and longing for some resting-place and for some settled work.

In the longest day of 1837 he found both resting-place and work at West Roxbury, a village near Boston. Then he married Lydia Cabot, and together they began the home they had planned to make. West Roxbury was a pretty country place, and the minister's house lay in a pleasant garden, bright with flowers and vines, and sheltered by well-grown trees. Close to the garden ran the long village road, with the homes of the poor people among whom the new minister's work would lie. But very near, also, were the houses and gardens of people who were somewhat better off in this world's goods. They, too, became friends of Theodore Parker and his wife, and with them were spent many happy hours, either in their well-ordered homes, or in the sunny meadows that lay round West Roxbury.

Theodore Parker had a great love for little children. Tiny feet soon learned to make their way from his neighbours' houses to his own; tiny fingers often tapped at his study door, and baby voices called out 'Parkie, Parkie' at the keyhole, and made music in his quiet home. He had pet names for the little

visitors—such as ‘mites o’ Teants’ and ‘pets o’ blossom.’ Stores of playthings, carts and dolls and wooden horses were kept for them to play with near his writing table. Even on his journeys he carried little presents in his pockets to charm and soothe any cross little traveller in a railway carriage or steamer. In a year or two after their marriage he and his wife took into their home as their adopted child a little orphan boy named Charles Cabot. By all these means he tried to make up for the want of children in his own happy home, and as months passed by the love of the husband and wife grew daily stronger and more deep.

But before his life at West Roxbury began dear old ties were broken. There were empty places in the farm-house at Lexington, and it was only on rare occasions that Theodore could bear to speak of the old days at home, and of the dear ones whom he should see no more on earth.

Sometimes the fear came to him that in this quiet village life he was not using all his powers. Really, however, this time, when he seemed to have few chances for work and in-

fluence, was rich in preparation for the future. He read books of all sorts, and thought much : and he learned lessons of wisdom from the lives of the ignorant country people about him.

Just opposite his house, across the village street, lived a poor farm labourer, with his wife and five young children. This man had hard work to earn money for his rent, and for the needful food and clothes for his family, and while he worked on the farm his wife toiled at home all day. Some new people, named Wallace, came to live in the village. No one knew anything about them ; yet they sadly needed friends ; for the mother was dying of consumption, and was too weak to take care of her two little children, while the father was away at his work all day. It was not long before Theodore's opposite neighbours heard of these new-comers. Then the busy mother of the five children left her own home and work to see how she could help in so sad a case. She soon saw what was most wanted, and bringing the baby to her own crowded home, lest the sick woman should be disturbed by its cries, she went back again to

wash the clothes and do the work of the neglected house. Then, night after night, when her own children were asleep, she sat up to nurse the stranger who had no friends to look to her in her own home.

Theodore Parker saw all this done. He saw, too, how another well-meaning person in the village, who cared more for the *creed* she held than for a loving life, went also to the poor home in this time of trouble. But this second visitor only frightened the poor weak woman with the views she herself held, and drove sleep from her with tales of a belief which her ignorant mind failed to understand. Most clear it was to Theodore that true religion is shown best by gentle, tender deeds. He thought of the noisy camp-meeting in the woods, and of the quiet worship of the duty-loving fishermen of Barnstable. He remembered, too, the city church in Boston, where he had heard the hard, dreary creeds preached, and he taught his people of West Roxbury that, 'God's Church is to be found wherever His children reach out their loving hands by help and service to each other.'

So the peaceful days passed by, spent amid

books and thoughts and experiences of life. By-and-by the narrow village path thus faithfully trodden led Theodore Parker out into the broad field of the world. In this way, step by step, the best and bravest lives are built up.







## CHAPTER V.

### SEEKERS OF THE TRUTH.

THE village church in which Theodore preached each Sunday was only a small building, and he had few hearers. On sunny mornings the shadows of the trees outside were cast through the windows on the walls within, and songs of birds came in through the open doorway, and mingled with the hymns the people sang. For the most part the men and women who came to worship there were simple country people. They walked through the lanes from their cottages and farms, glad to listen to simple sermons about their everyday lives. For in Theodore Parker's eyes even the commonest work was noble. The milking of a cow, or the brushing of a floor, were great and holy duties—so he thought ; and he used to tell his

people of the high aims that may glorify even the humblest lot, and of the strength God gives to lowly souls that obey His guiding voice in *little* things.

A stream flowed down from the hills through the woods and fields near West Roxbury. It leaped over rocks, and rushed down its channel on the steep hill-side, till it reached the meadows near the village, where ferns and reeds bent over it, and saw their images reflected in the peaceful stream. Happy children used to play beside this brook on summer days, sailing their little wooden and paper boats upon it. In one place, on the bank, stood an old water-mill. There wondering boys and girls used to stand sometimes beside the great wheel, and watch how the running water turned it slowly round to grind the miller's corn.

Some of these children may have been in the church one Sunday morning when Theodore Parker spoke in his sermon of this great mill-wheel. Perhaps they knew what he meant when he went on to say that, as this everflowing stream from the hills above gave the miller's wheel power to grind his corn, so God's strength would flow into every human soul that turned

itself in prayer to Him. In just this sort of way did Theodore Parker find a beautiful meaning in the common things of life, and try to bring thoughts of Heaven into the daily ways of men.

It often seemed to him that people made a great mistake in thinking that the Bible told them of lands and times that were holier than their own could be. He wanted them to be sure that God was close to them in their own lives, speaking in their hearts, as he had spoken in the hearts of prophets long ago : so that when they felt sure a thing was right to do or say, they might say of their own consciences, which told them so, ' Thus saith the Lord.'

Such thoughts as these came to him in his quiet country life. They grew clearer and stronger as time went on ; and other thoughts followed them, which he knew he must some time give as his message to the world. The time to do so had not yet come, however ; and while he waited he grew strong in faith and courage. It was well he grew thus strong, for great troubles lay before him. By-and-by men were to give him the hard name of heretic—and names even harder to bear than that—because

he turned from the old ways of thought that the world had so long held dear.

The little corner of America where Lexington, Boston, and West Roxbury all lie, is called the State of Massachusetts. Theodore Parker was not the only man in Massachusetts who began to turn to new thoughts in those days. Books were coming over to America from England and Germany. They brought with them new forms of belief and fresh ideas. People who read these books began to question their own minds afresh, and to turn from the teachings of their senses only and of old customs, to the teachings of 'innate ideas,' as they called the reason and judgment planted within them.

These people called themselves 'Friends of Progress.' Some of them were young, and had made as yet no name in the world. Some were old, and were great leaders to young Theodore Parker. One of these men was Dr. Channing, whom we hold in loving memory now for his good words and holy life. Once upon a time, when Theodore's heart was heavy, some words from Dr. Channing cheered him, and sent him bravely on his way again. 'Give

my love to Theodore Parker,' said the wise elder man, 'and tell him to preach what he thoroughly believes and feels. Let the full heart pour itself forth.' But this happened after the time we are now reading about. Every week these 'Friends of Progress' used to meet in Boston to talk of subjects that were not quite clear to their minds. Theodore was one of the youngest of this band. Before long, however, a few of his companions were ready to follow in their thoughts where his words led.

Nor was it only the wise men of Boston who were thus awake. Across the waters of the sheltered bay, where three hundred years before the Puritan Fathers, persecuted at home, had found a safe refuge for their new faith, lay Cape Cod. Hardy fishermen lived on Cape Cod, who spent their days in fishing on the bay, or on the rough waves of the Atlantic Ocean, which beat upon their eastern coast. Lying out on the waves in their fishing boats waiting for wind or tide, these fishermen found time to think. Amid the terrors of the storm and perils of the sea, life was a very *real* thing to them ; and, like Theodore Parker, they

thought men lived too much in past times, and did not feel God present in every moment of their lives.

These fishers of Cape Cod called themselves 'Come Outers,' because they had come out of all churches to worship God in a way of their own. They used to say that in every home people ought to pray as in a temple; that all days are the Lord's days—not only Sundays, which men have set apart from the rest of the week. Theodore went about among the Cape Cod men, and when he saw how they tried to make *all* life religious, he thought their ways were very good ways, though they belonged to no Church and held no special creed.

Now the village of West Roxbury was, as has been said, a quiet country place: but not many miles away lay the busy city of Boston, and, further south, the still larger city of New York. News came to the quiet village from these noisy cities, where men lived closely packed in dingy, narrow streets: tales came of sin and sorrow that went on there, and of wars and crimes in the great world beyond. Theodore Parker had a friend named George Ripley living near Boston, in a pretty home with many

books and pictures about him, and everything to make life gay and pleasant.

But it made George Ripley so sad to hear these tales of the sin and trouble among the people in great cities, that he lost all joy in his own happy life, and thought the best way to mend the world would be to set the example of a way of living in which there should be neither very rich nor very poor. So he sold his pretty home, and formed a little colony called Brook Farm, where he and his wife, and some other people who thought like himself, had all things in common, and worked together on their daily wants.

Brook Farm lay just one mile from Theodore Parker's house. Often he crossed the meadows to see and talk with these brave friends of his ; there he used to find them busy ploughing and sowing, cooking and washing ; but they did not forget that their minds must be fed as well as their bodies. And when evening came, books and music had their turn, and all enjoyed them together like one large family.

These people had given up their wealth and pleasant homes to try to teach the world the

nobleness of daily toil, and to lessen the great division between the rich and poor. Theodore honoured them because they were so nobly true to what seemed right to them; but he did not think they had found the true way yet in which to mend the sins and sorrows of the world.

One night a great meeting was to be held at Harvard College. Ralph Waldo Emerson, famous in America in those days, though he became much more famous afterwards, was going to lecture to the students there. Hundreds of other people went to listen, and Theodore, who loved the familiar red-brick buildings in whose walls he had learned so much, went also with his wife to hear what the wise man would say. Mr. Emerson was one of the 'Friends of Progress,' and he had something he wanted to tell the Harvard students about the duties of a Christian preacher and the help that the Christian Church should give the world. It would take long to tell all he said that night; some people were surprised and even shocked, and some were glad. Theodore was glad, and as he went home he felt sure that at last the time had come when he must preach **his message to the world.**



But he knew that in doing so he should grieve many dear old friends, for people were not then used to hear the sort of things he had to say ; and when he asked counsel of one or two wise and trusted men they answered him thus :—‘ Keep silent, you will do no good by telling all you think ; you will frighten your hearers and bring evil on yourself.’ This was a warning to which many men who longed to live in peace, as he longed, would have listened. But to him, another voice seemed to speak and it said, ‘ Do the best, be the best, and say the best you can,’ and back to him over the long years came the memory of his mother’s words, ‘ Your life depends on your heeding this little voice.’

So Theodore Parker made up his mind to speak out all the truth he knew. First in the village church of West Roxbury he told the simple people some of these thoughts of his. All his words were always good to them, and they came to thank him for the new light he had thrown for them upon the Bible. But it was quite another matter when, in a great, old church in Boston, he preached his  
t to strangers. From that time men

gave him the name of heretic and unbeliever, and turned away from him when they met him in the streets. Preachers refused to let him speak in their pulpits, and old companions grieved his loving heart by their coldness and refusal of his outstretched hand. And what had Theodore Parker, with his loving reverent heart, said, that could shock and wound the people of Boston in those days? A few words will tell, and if we cannot now think like him, we must still honour him for his truthfulness, and for his great reverence for God, which the blinded people of his own time could not see.





## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BRAVE HERETIC.

THE people who lived long ago among the hills of Greece used to believe that the gods they worshipped lived far away on a glorious mountain top, and looked down thence upon the distant homes of men. But one day a new fable arose among them. It was said that one of those far-off gods had come down to earth and taken up his abode among men; for on the flowery fields of Thessaly he had entered into the form of a common shepherd boy and watched the sheep of King Admetus. This fable brought the Greek people just a little nearer to the truth, if it broke down the gulf they made between the gods and men, and made them fancy that the humblest human soul might be inspired from above.

It was no fable Theodore Parker wanted to tell people, but a truth which yet bore some likeness to this story of the ancient Greeks. For he thought that men in his own time had poor and narrow views of God and of His dealings with the world, and he wanted to teach them to find Him always acting in their homes and lives. In this many people thought as he did ; but he went further than this, and then they called him heretic and unbeliever. He spoke of the Bible, and said men worshipped it as the unerring guide for all their ways, as the *only* message given by God to men in distant times when he spoke once for all to a few holy chosen souls. And in thus doing, he said they were wrong, for they put a limit to God's love and the working of His spirit in the world. He said to them 'the Bible is one thing, but Religion is another. If there were no Bible we should still hear God's voice within ; His love is wider than men know and He still lives and speaks to them as plainly as He spoke in days of old. Let each man, woman, and child keep open soul to receive God's messages, and we shall all be inspired. Let us reverence the Bible for what it is and for all its holy thoughts,



Theodore Parker would have had them faithful to the teachings of conscience above all, with all due reverence for the Bible where its holy words may speak to us as those of no other book can do.

It was in this kind of way that Theodore spoke in Boston. He told of the great, wide communion of God with every human soul, and he left the many creeds that men have formed on one side. For he cared little for forms of belief. True religion, he said, was above the changing opinions of men. Yet, because he believed in one God he called himself a Unitarian, as his fathers had done before him, and now the ministers of the Unitarian Churches in Boston were shocked by his free speech. They could not see the reverent spirit that lay in all he said, and the dream never crossed the minds of most of them that perhaps, after all, his thoughts of God were wiser and grander than their own.

Some of these old friends of his called a meeting together, and asked Theodore to attend; and at this meeting hard words were said of him, and cruel names given to him. Perhaps at this time Dr. Channing's message,

'Give my love to Theodore Parker, and tell him to preach what he thoroughly believes and feels,' strengthened the young man's courage. The wise old man by this time had died, and the gentle memory of him was all that remained. Well, at this meeting one man after another rose up to blame Theodore, and he seemed to stand alone, forsaken by all present. At last, in gentler words, one praised his truthfulness, and another followed in similar strains. Then he broke down, and could bear no more. Worn out and wearied, he went weeping from the room.

After this came a long, long time when few would speak to him. He was tender-hearted and loving, and this treatment wounded him sorely. Still he was brave and true, and willing to stand alone if need be, and 'to let off the truth just as it came to him.' He was still a member of the great Church of God, and his message to men he would speak, and no man should silence him. But he often thought that the time would come when no church on earth would be left to open its doors to him. Then he knew what he would do. He would go out into the fields and glens, and

on the roadsides, wherever men and women were to be found, and he would make the land ring with his voice.

Many friends had warned him to be silent and hide these thoughts of his. They had said to him, 'If you find errors in the Bible you will frighten the world, and bring evil on yourself.' Now all these warnings had been realized. Yet Theodore was glad he had spoken, and still he cried, 'Not *one* book only is inspired, and not a few ancient men alone; but all *may* be inspired, for still God lives and loves.'

Two hundred years before Theodore Parker's time, kings and princes had gathered together in Germany to silence Martin Luther when he proclaimed the need of reformation in the Church. All in vain. Fearless he rose up and spoke the truth from his heart, saying, 'Here I am, God help me, I can do no other.' Where would the world have been if Martin Luther had kept silence because he was afraid of what men might do or say? So with Theodore Parker; the boy was father of the man, and he was still determined to be and do and say the very wisest and best he could. Yet it



was hard for him to do so ; for it *seemed* as if no place would soon be left where people would be able to listen to him. Still he trusted the way would open in good time, and his sad heart found comfort in his home, in the love of little children, and his work and books.

Time passed, and by-and-by the lonely man was asked by some brave people to give some lectures in Boston. He agreed at once to do so, and the doors of a great building in Boston, called the Masonic Hall, were opened to him. A crowd of curious people flocked to hear, and went home again, it is said, 'with their hearts aflame.' The next winter he lectured again, and after this he resolved to have his lectures published, that what he believed and spoke might be more widely known. But he had to seek long before he found a publisher willing to help forward such a book. When at last it came out, it quickly travelled far and wide through America, and crossed the sea to our English shores. Thus the seed he sowed was springing up ; but Theodore did not yet guess the harvest that should be reaped. Long afterwards he heard the following story of a boy who read that first book of his.

One Sunday, an idle youth in a country house, who found time pass slowly, looked for a book to help to wile away the hours. Someone gave him that new book by Theodore Parker which was still almost unknown. Nothing better was at hand, so he took it, fearing, however, to find it very dull. Some days afterwards the youth brought back the book to its owner, and said to him,—

‘Will you sell me that book? I want to own it.’

It was given to him, and he went away. Years after the idle youth had become an earnest, noble man, the helper of every good cause he met with. The book which he still owned, was bound in leather to preserve it, but the pages were loose and falling out, so often had he read it himself and lent it; and all that was worth having in himself he traced to the influence of those brave teachings of the heretic Theodore Parker.

But, meanwhile, the preacher himself was walking in the dark. He seemed to be breaking away from all the quiet old ways and thoughts into some unknown field of work, and it was a comfort to him now and then to

go back to Lexington to see the old haunts of his boyhood, and pluck the violets on his mother's grave. He grew worn and thin, and kind friends, who were still left to him, joined together to send him to Europe for rest and change of scene. So one day, his wife and he said their good-byes to West Roxbury for a year, and sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in search of health and peace.





## CHAPTER VII.

### SCATTERING BROADCAST.

A JOYFUL welcome met him at West Roxbury when, strong and ready for new work, Theodore Parker set his foot again at home. He had been among the grand Swiss mountains and the Italian lakes, and he had lived in old cities which spoke to him of the great deeds of the past ; and, best of all, he had met with, and talked to, wise and noble men whose words gave him courage to follow after truth, and give his best thoughts to the world.

West Roxbury had missed his kindly words and deeds, and the cheerful voice and presence that made the world bright to others, however sad he might be himself. Now he was strong and able to bear the coldness which began again to meet him in Boston on every side.

Sunday after Sunday he spoke to the few listeners in his village church, and longed to be of wider use among his fellow-men; but there seemed to be no further opening for him.

Now, there was at this time in Boston, away from the great city churches where the rich and well-born people flourished, a mission church hidden away in a poor part of the town, where working men and women flocked together to find the bread of life. The preacher in this church was a Mr. Sargent, a good friend to his people, who used to seek them out in their poor houses, and try to help and comfort the sins and sorrows of the Boston back streets and courts. He knew that Theodore's words were such as his people needed; for they told of the love of God, and of hope for every down-trodden, sinful man. So one day he asked him to preach to the people in the mission church, and poor, weary men and women came from their hard, sad homes to listen, and went back with new strength. But Mr. Sargent forfeited his church by this act. The people who had placed him in his mission work were among the men who called Theodore Parker a heretic and 'unsound' in belief; so

the poor people lost their preacher and friend. Yet some good arose out of this wrong. The story went abroad—and certain young men who loved justice and fair play resolved that ‘Theodore Parker should have a chance to be heard in Boston.’

In those days a great gloomy building, called the ‘Melodeon,’ was standing in Boston. Because no church would open its doors to such a preacher, these young men hired the ‘Melodeon,’ and asked Mr. Parker to preach there every Sunday morning to such people as would come to listen. This chance could not be lost, and it was settled he should preach in Boston every Sunday morning, and return to his own church and people at West Roxbury for the evening service.

It was a cold, wet morning in February, 1845, when Theodore Parker first spoke in the ‘Melodeon.’ Snow lay on the streets and roofs, wind and rain blew and splashed against the gloomy building, and the dark sky threatened storm. Surely only a few hearers would venture out on such a day! Not so: careless of rain and snow, people crowded in till the great hall was full. Sunday after Sunday they

came together, and some of them had never been in a church, and some were tired of creeds they could not believe, and all came gladly to hear one speak who gave them faith and hope once more. There was always one spot of beauty in this ugly building. Before the preacher, on his desk, stood flowers in water—wild flowers as the spring advanced—violets and lilies and gentians from the brook near his old home; and these country messengers helped him to tell his message to the dwellers in the city of the ever-present love of God.

Before long a new step in his life's pathway opened out to Theodore Parker. It was plain that *all* Sunday must be given up to the crowds at the Melodeon. He must leave West Roxbury, and use all his time and strength in the new work in the city. So there was a sad farewell sermon to his village friends, and a sad farewell, also, to his pretty country home. Then life began for him and his family in Boston. The new house was in a street. Meadows and trees were changed for houses, and the birds' songs for the noises of city life. But every room was kept bright with flowers, creeping plants were trained in

his study-window, and playthings for the children still found room near his desk, though books covered shelves and tables and spread themselves over the rest of the house. What a change from the day when the farmer's boy had earned his first book by picking whortleberries in the early morning in the Lexington field! Every day his life became more full of work. He began to travel over the country to lecture in distant towns, and in lonely places where settlers still lived in their rough log huts. On such journeys he used to carry a bag of books with him to read on the way. Often, however, the books were laid aside, that he might talk with his fellow-travellers. In this way he sowed good, brave thoughts among the young, and gave comfort to sad people, and never knew at the time what became of the seed he sowed.

Perhaps, if such people had known the name of the stranger who cheered their lives, and gave them fresh hopes, they would have shrunk away from him; for report was busy with his name, and news of his heresies spread quickly over the land. But, unknown, he made his way at once to the hearers of all he met.



‘ Ah ! ’ said an old lady one day, who chanced to hear him preach as a stranger in a country place—‘ Ah ! if that infidel, Theodore Parker, could only have heard this man preach ! ’

It was no easy life to travel and lecture in this way. Often he was wet through ; often without food when weak and weary ; and often he came home worn out and ill. At home, too, he was always busy. About this time he began to write a book on the growth of religious ideas in the world ; and this book he planned to finish in ten years’ time, if he lived so long. But he had few quiet minutes without interruption. Up into his study from early morn till late at night came all sorts of people, wanting all sorts of help and advice ; and every day he wrote many letters. But through all this busy life, Theodore Parker’s was a pattern home ; and every person who came there felt its peace and the sunshine he spread within it.

Strange to tell, pictures of bears and carved images of bears, little and large, were to be found in every room in his house, and his wife’s pet name was ‘ Bearsie.’ One day, in the Swiss town of Berne, he had seen the patient,

pitiful bears in their deep, dreary pit, and had loved the thought of the great powerful creatures ever after.

Through the noisy, dirty streets of Boston visions of the fair country home he had lately lived in went with him constantly : and sometimes he and his wife took holiday together, to see the early apple blossoms at West Roxbury, or the flowers in the fields round the old farm at Lexington. But even better visions than those of country sights and sounds went with him wherever he went ;—holy thoughts and high ideals, which he put forth into his daily life, and thus made it rich with noble deeds. Some of these thoughts now and then took the form of poems, and he said one day to an old friend, ‘ I sing prayers when I loiter in the woods or travel the quiet road.’ Read one of these prayers thus sung. No wonder a grand life grew out of such thoughts, when every *little* chance for work was used, and every *little* duty was done.

‘ Father, I will not ask for wealth or fame,  
Though once they would have joyed my carnal sense.  
I shudder not to bear a hated name,  
Wanting all wealth, myself my sole defence.

But give me, Lord, eyes to behold the truth—  
A seeing sense, that knows the eternal Right :  
A heart with pity filled and gentlest truth ;  
A manly faith that makes all darkness light.  
Give me the power to labour for mankind ;  
Make me the mouth of such as cannot speak ;  
Eyes let me be to groping men and blind :  
A conscience to the base : and to the weak  
Let me be hands and feet ; and to the foolish, mind :  
And lead still further on such as Thy Kingdom seek.'

Day by day his influence spread more widely. There was no fear now, as there had been at West Roxbury, that he was not using all his powers. In doubt and danger he had sown his seed, and God had sent the winds to blow it far and wide over the land. Well for him that he had said in faith what he thought right ; for now, in distant lands, his words brought help to many thirsty souls, though still at home in Boston he was often met by anger and scorn.

Hundreds of miles away, in the wild lands of Minnesota, where the great river Mississippi takes its rise, a working man had gone out from Boston in those days to make a new home in the lonely plains. There was a hard fight to be fought with treacherous Indians :

forests to cut down and swamps to drain : and the sharers of his toil were a few workmen like himself. By degrees they built a saw-mill and a blacksmith's forge, and two or three wooden huts to live in. But they had brought little besides their tools from the distant city. One possession more this unlearned leader of the little company had with him. This was a volume of Theodore Parker's sermon's : and at night, when work was over, he and his comrades used to gather round the log-fire, and the best reader among them would spell out the sermons ; and then all talked over their meaning, while the stormy winds howled round this little church in the wilds.

By and by, Theodore Parker had a letter from these camp-men, asking him to send them out some more of his sermons—such as would suit a rough settler's mind the best. His words had taught them to work with a will, and to see a holy calling in the labour of turning the wilderness into a garden.

Another day, a letter, badly spelt and hard to read, came to him from the Far West. A poor farm-boy sent it. He told in it how years before he had lost his left hand. Then

brothers and friends clubbed together to send him to school, where he learned to read, and came upon Theodore Parker's first published book, 'The Discourse on Religion.' Then he was made a teacher, and when he had earned enough money, he sent to Boston for more sermons. These he lent to other people, and could not keep to himself the new thoughts they taught him. So a cry rose against him in the village where he lived. He was called an infidel, and old friends and brothers forsook him. All this he wrote, ending his letter thus:—'I expect in a few days to have no home. I am poor. Last summer I was a day-labourer. Now no one will receive "an infidel" on his farm. I want to get work in Boston, where I can clasp you by the hand, and listen to your noble words, and take example from your manly life. Write brave words to me, and I will try to live down all this opposition.' There is no need to tell that Theodore Parker stretched out his strong right hand of help to this new disciple, and the youth became another centre of influence to many others.

Now, what Theodore Parker did that so changed the current of the thoughts and lives

of the men and women who listened to him, was this. He taught them to look *within* for the clear voice of God, and to believe that endless grace and strength might be their own if they sought for them. So will and faith grew strong in his hearers; and, instead of searching always into the past for a dead message which moved the souls of others once long ago, hard-working men and weary-burdened women, and youths and maidens, meeting the cares and puzzles of life, learned to say, 'The Lord is on my side *now*, and I will listen to His whisper in my soul, and will follow wherever it may lead.'

This was Theodore Parker's idea of inspiration, and this was the message he gave to the people of his own time, who were so apt to think the Bible was the only word of God, and to twist its precepts, drawn from any page, into guides for their own blind lives. No wonder the rough settlers blessed this man, who taught them their true source of strength as they gathered round the camp fire at night; and no wonder he himself had no fear of the hard names given to him by his fellow-men. The wonder is that they could not see how much

grander and truer his view of inspiration was than their own.

On the last night of the year 1852, Theodore Parker wrote thus in his Journal:—‘Forty-two years ago my father, a hale man in his fifty-first year, was looking for the birth of another child before morning. Poor father! and poor, dear mother! You little knew how many a man would curse the son you brought into life and piously and religiously trained up. Well, I will bless you. True mother and father were you to me—the earliest thing you taught me was duty. Duty to God and duty to man: that life was not a pleasure and not a pain—but a duty. Your words taught me this, and your industrious lives. What would I not give that I could have added more gladness to your life on earth—earnest, toilsome, not without sorrow. As you look down from heaven—if, indeed, you can see your youngest child—there will be much to chide. I hope there is something to approve. Dear, merciful Father God, I would serve Thee and bless mankind!’

So he looked back over forty-two years, and saw the ever-widening path which he had

trodden step by step in faith. No early struggles were forgotten; and because he remembered so well those hard days of work that he had gone through when he first entered Harvard College, therefore he had kindly thoughts for youths who were now in similar case. So he wrote each year to the Principal of the College, and asked him for the names of any new-comers who were poor, and in need of help to pay their college fees. Then followed unexpected presents to cheer those down-cast hearts. His house in Boston, too, was always open to lonely students far away from their own homes.

One day the son of an old friend of Mr. Parker's entered Harvard. His home was in the country, and his family so poor that great efforts had been required to find the means to send him to college. Theodore Parker guessed that the mother and sisters, in their poverty at home, were grieving that they could do no more for the boy they had sent out into the world. Accordingly, it was not long before their home was gladdened by the news that a valuable book the young student needed, and could not buy, reached him with the following little



note:—‘ Dear Jo, This book is from one who loves your father very much, and hopes to like you equally well : so be a good boy.’ More books and other comforts followed this first gift : and the youth became one of many who would not for the world have disappointed Theodore Parker’s hopes for their future.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM.

IN the year 1852 came another change. 'The heretic, Theodore Parker,' gathered such crowds of listeners round him each Sunday that the Melodeon was no longer large enough to hold them. The great Music Hall in Boston would admit three thousand people ; and that building was now chosen for his use. There every seat was filled ; and before the vast, silent crowd stood this man, who had once been a farmer's boy in Lexington—and three thousand souls waited for him to speak.

'How can I feed so great a multitude ?' he thought ; 'I am but as the boy with five barley loaves and two small fishes.' Yet, true to his own doctrine of inspiration, he listened while God spoke to him ; and then forth came

his message to the waiting crowds, and he never failed to touch their hearts. The fact was, all he said had first come home to himself so clearly that it presented itself to his hearers as a living truth that could not be gainsaid.

One day he spoke of the great love of God, which gives hope of restoration even for the most guilty. There sat in a gallery that morning a poor cast-away, who had, perhaps, gone astray and lost himself in the temptations of the city. The better nature of this man, so long asleep, woke up in answer to Theodore Parker's words ; and, to his own surprise, he cried out, ' I know it to be so ! I feel it to be so ! '

Theodore Parker stopped and, turning to the place whence the voice seemed to come, he answered, ' Yes, my friend, and you cannot wander so far off but God can call you back.' So came light into the dark places, and so fresh life sprang up in stony ground, because this man from his boyhood had listened to and obeyed the ' inner voice.'

There is a hymn written by Theodore Parker that we sometimes sing in our churches and Sunday schools. No doubt it was some-

times sung by the great multitude in the Boston Music Hall. He who was a leader to so many people in his own day had a very reverent spirit, and he looked up to many leaders greater and better than himself. Of all these leaders, Jesus Christ was the Head, and so he wrote thus of Christ and loved to hear the people sing these words :—

‘ Oh ! thou, great Friend to all the sons of men,  
Who once appeared in humblest guise below,  
Sin to rebuke, to break the captive’s chain,  
And call thy brethren forth from want and woe—

We look to thee, thy truth is still the Light  
Which guides the nations groping on their way,  
Stumbling and falling in disastrous night,  
Yet hoping ever for the perfect day.

Yes, thou art still the Life ; thou art the Way  
The holiest know ; Life, Light, and Way of Heaven,  
And they who dearest hope and deepest pray  
Toil by the Life, Light, Way which Thou hast given.’

It is strange to think that in the Boston churches at this time preachers were preaching against the ‘infidel’ Theodore Parker, and praying for his conversion ! Meanwhile, as he prayed in the Music Hall, tears would chase each other down his face, so much in earnest was he ; and as he read the story of Christ’s

life on earth to the people, at certain passages he was unable from deep feeling to go on; yet they were old, old tales to most men, and tales by which they could no longer be moved to tears.

Here is one more poem by Theodore Parker. Then our story must tell of very different scenes and times; for stern days were at hand, full of great danger for men like him.

‘Oh, Brother, who for us dost meekly wear  
The crown of thorns about thy radiant brow,  
What gospel from the Father dost thou bear  
Our hearts to cheer, making us happy now?  
'Tis this alone, the immortal Saviour cries,  
To fill thy heart with ever active love;  
Love for the wicked as in sin he lies,  
Love for thy brother here, thy God above,  
Fear nothing ill, 'twill vanish in its day;  
Live for the good, taking the ill thou must,  
Toil with thy might, with manly labour pray,  
Living, and loving, learn thy God to trust,  
And He will shed upon thy soul the blessings of the just.’

Twenty years had passed away since William Lloyd Garrison, a poor and unknown youth, had set up his printing press in a gloomy garret in Boston and begun to publish the *Liberator*, his anti-slavery paper. Week after week he had worked on patiently, saying

to himself, 'I am in earnest, I will be heard ;' and by-and-by the people of America were compelled to listen. Slave owners began to fear the little paper which spoke so bravely against the crime of slavery, and so pitifully of the sorrows of the slave. They tried to stop it and crush its sale, but in vain. People only began to read the paper the more and to talk about it. It could no longer be said that people were ignorant or silent about slavery, for the once feeble cry from that poor, dark room began to ring through the land. Then a few men joined Garrison in Boston and formed an anti-slavery society ; and then in other cities, two or three more followed their example and, fearless of threats, upheld the unpopular cause.

In the year 1845, when Theodore Parker left his quiet country home and work in the village of West Roxbury for the wider interests of city life in Boston, Garrison became known to him ; and just about the same time events took place in America, which helped to turn his thoughts to the struggle against slavery which Garrison was living to uphold. For in that same year 1845, the great waste lands of Texas were to be added to the United States,

and the question arose, was this new state to be a slave state or a free one.


Theodore Parker's religion was not a religion of creeds. He thought that men must not only believe in God, they must also 'do justly and love mercy.' He knew that sooner or later the question must be settled whether America should be a free empire or a slave empire; and if a handful of earnest people, by their earnestness and influence could help to incline a nation towards right deeds, he must be one of the handful. So he made up his mind that life and strength must be given by him, if need be, to this struggle against slavery, and while most other preachers did not dare to speak on this subject in their churches, to him it often seemed there could be no better lesson for the day.

One morning in the year 1846 a ship from New Orleans, where slave-holders abounded, sailed into Boston Harbour. Boston men owned the ship and Boston sailors formed her crew. The sun shone brightly on the white sails, as if to welcome her return home; and the sailors, glad to reach her own shores, sprang joyfully on land. From the ship's hold

crawled a poor, wretched slave, half-dead with fear and hunger. He had hidden himself away in that dark hole to escape from his master in New Orleans, and hoped he should be set free if once on Boston soil, where no slaves are kept. But the poor fellow was mistaken. The sailors went to their own homes and were welcomed by glad wives and happy children. The sun might shine on free and happy Boston, but the miserable slave was sent back to slavery by the Boston owners of the ship.

Now was a time when indeed Boston must be roused! Garrison's patient work for so many years had not been in vain. His *Liberator* had prepared the way, and when Theodore Parker joined with him to summon a huge town's meeting in Faneuil Hall and called together a Vigilance Committee to guard that such an outrage should never disgrace the city again, then the people of Boston answered with a will, and the great Hall was packed from floor to roof.

Hundreds of men never forgot the noble, eloquent words they heard from Theodore Parker that night. But his speech called forth the rage of the friends of slavery. They





mocked at the 'higher law of love' which he said forbade the custom of slavery permitted by the law of the land, and they accused him of overthrowing the teachings of the Bible when he proclaimed the crime of making human beings into slaves. The newspapers had bitter words against him, and Boston merchants, who lived by means of slave-grown cotton, upheld a strong party against this handful of workers for the cause of freedom.

There is a grand old story which tells how an angry king, long years ago, went forth into the lonely desert to rebuke a brave prophet who was trying to rouse the Jewish people to believe in a truer religion than they had known before, and the first words of the king were:—'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' Whenever a new teacher wakens the minds of men to higher light, then the old spirits of the king and the prophet meet face to face once more, and the prophet is blamed for the loss of the old false peace in which the world lay before he began to speak.

So when Theodore Parker preached his doctrine of inspiration, or when he spoke against slavery, it was said that he troubled

America. But the real troubler in that case, as in every other such case, was the spirit that was content with old ways, and would not waken to the new gleams of light that dawned upon the earth.

Now, one reason why Theodore Parker had the spirit of the old prophet, and not that of the king, was because he always kept before his view a great principle, by which he tried to rule all his acts. Just as, when a boy, he had vowed to be and do and say the very best he knew; so now that he was a man the same wish was strong within him, and he would take no course, however trifling, but that which he felt to be the most right and true. Whenever he met with any one who thus tried to rule his life by such a guiding principle, such an one became a hero and a leader to Theodore Parker. History gave him many examples of this kind; others he found among people living in his own day. In his study was the portrait of such a leader. This was a statesman, named Daniel Webster, whom Boston then sent as her representative to Congress. This man Theodore Parker honoured because he believed him to be true and honest, living to help forward

whatever was right and just, with no thought for his own gain or loss in the matter.

But one morning Theodore took down this man's portrait from his study wall, and, kissing it sadly, he turned it away where he could no longer see the once much loved face. What had happened? That day America was ringing with terrible news. A Bill had been passed in Congress, called the 'Fugitive Slave Bill.' This Bill decreed that any slave fleeing from his owner into a free State might be pursued and carried back into slavery. Moreover, it announced that any one who gave shelter in a free State to a slave thus hiding, would be liable to a fine of 1,000 dollars, and six months' imprisonment. *Now* there seemed small chance of safety for slaves in any part of the United States; and Daniel Webster had been the chief supporter of this Bill! Theodore knew that his fallen hero had acted thus to please the pro-slavery men and gain their votes for his election as future President.

The following Sunday the Melodeon was crowded as usual. In his sermon, Theodore Parker spoke of the Fugitive Slave Bill.

No doubt his hearers knew beforehand how strongly he would speak against the injustice of the law. But a great awe fell upon the crowd when he said that at the first chance he should *break* this new law! For some moments there was silence through the hall. Plainly here was a man who dared to be true to his conscience in deed as well as in word. Then what was best deep down in his hearers' souls answered to his words, and the silence was broken by a great outburst of cheers.





## CHAPTER IX.

### 'A HERO IN THE STRIFE.'

**A**MONG the people who used to worship each Sunday in the Melodeon were a carpenter and his wife—William and Ellen Craft. They had a nice little home in Boston, where they had lived for many years. Theodore Parker knew them well, and went often to see them in their own house, and welcomed them gladly when they came to visit him. He knew the sad story of their past lives, but it was a secret from other people in Boston. Years ago they had been held as slaves (for they had a little negro blood in their veins) by a cruel master in one of the southern States. They had managed to escape from slavery, and had fled a distance of 900 miles, hiding in swamps and passing through unknown lands till they found a resting

place in Boston in the Free State of Massachusetts. There they had lived peaceful, hard-working lives till one dreadful day in 1850, soon after the Fugitive Slave Bill had passed Congress. That day Theodore Parker, who had been lecturing in a distant town, came home late. Then he heard that slave hunters were in the city searching for his friends, William and Ellen Craft.

Now came the first chance for him to break the wicked new law. If he would love his neighbour as himself he must save his neighbour from being carried off as a slave. No time was to be lost. That night he took the poor woman into his own house, and wrote his next Sunday's sermon with a loaded pistol on his desk. Nor did his work end here. Venturing still further, he sought out the slave hunters in their hotel, and scared them by his scornful words right out of Boston. Before many days were over, William and Ellen Craft were sailing over the Atlantic Ocean to a safe refuge in England.

Not long afterwards another slave named Anthony Burns, who had sought refuge in Boston, was seized and shut up in the court-

house of the city at the time Theodore Parker was saying good-bye to some dear old friends who were about to sail for Europe.

‘I doubt if they will ever see me again,’ he wrote in his journal; ‘for I must not let a fugitive slave be carried out of Boston, cost what it may. I will not use weapons to rescue a man, but I will go unarmed wherever a reasonable chance of success offers, and I will make a rescue.’ Then he made his way to the slave-pen in the court-house, and putting his hand into that of the despairing man, bade him have courage for help was at hand.

That night another great meeting was held in Faneuil Hall. There Theodore Parker’s words made many hearts beat quickly; for he called on the men who heard him to go quickly with only the arms God gave them to rescue this poor slave. ‘Men and brethren,’ he cried, ‘I am not a young man. I have heard cheers for liberty many times, but I have not seen many deeds done for liberty. I ask you, are we to have *deeds* as well as *words*? Be sure the men who kidnap a man in Boston are cowards, every mother’s son of them; and if we stand up and declare this man shall not go

out of the City of Boston without shooting a gun, then he won't go back.'

In that great meeting, men were moved to right deeds by Theodore Parker's earnestness. There was a great rush to the court-house to rescue the imprisoned slave. But a report of the meeting in Faneuil Hall had spread abroad, and soldiers were sent down to guard the court-house. The attempted rescue failed. Next day Anthony Burns was carried down to the harbour by a strong guard; but the Vigilance Committee hung with black the Boston streets through which he passed.

Theodore Parker's promise of help to the slave, Anthony Burns, did not end thus. A sum of money was raised, with which to buy him from his owners. He was sent to college, and the dull, crushed mind slowly wakened up. In course of time he was able to write to Theodore Parker, who had never lost sight of him, and had sent him every now and then words of kindly help. The letter told how his thoughts went back to the day in the Boston court-house, when this brave friend was not afraid to push his way into the slave-pen, and take the hand of the runaway, friendless slave.



Such were some of the ways in which Theodore Parker helped the cause of freedom in America. No time was left now for quiet study, and the hope, which had been so dear to him, of writing a book on the growth of religion, died away. Longer and more frequent journeys must be taken. Sometimes he went to lecture against slavery into the very Slave States themselves. He feared no danger while about his duty, and asked not whether he was among enemies or friends.

One night, while on one of these journeys, he was present at a great meeting of the friends of slavery. He stood in a closely-packed gallery, and looked down upon the excited crowd below. Not knowing that he was there to answer him, one of the speakers ended his speech by saying,—

‘I should like to know what Theodore Parker would say to *that!*’

The hall was filled with men who upheld slavery, and who were ready to lay violent hands on any one who opposed their views. Theodore knew this well; but he loved justice and right more than he loved his life, and he cried out with a clear strong voice,—

‘Would you like to know? I’ll tell you what Theodore Parker says to it;’ and then he spoke out bravely in defence of freedom for the slaves.

That was the signal for a riot. The excited people knew then who he was, and shouted out his name, with cries of,—

‘Kill him! Kill him! Throw him over!’

It seemed as if nothing could save him from their fury, when, wonderful to tell, he calmed the raging crowd by his voice and quiet, resolute bearing.

‘You will do no such thing,’ the people felt rather than heard him say—‘You will do no such thing, and I will tell you what I say to this matter.’

So his courage and calmness quelled the tumult, and in the midst of slaveowners and upholders of slavery, he gained a hearing for the truths he had to tell.

More than one such event as this happened. Truly, he was giving up life and strength in the struggle, and far and wide, wherever the great question of freedom or slavery arose, Theodore Parker’s name was heard. Into the White House at Washington, where sat the President,

Millard Fillmore, who had signed the Fugitive Slave Bill, came his stirring words. He wrote the President a letter, telling him that when fugitive slaves came to his own door seeking help, he could not forget the words of Christ, — ‘Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, ye have not done it unto me.’ Therefore, though fine and prison waited for him, he *must* help such men in their trouble; he *must* reverence the laws of God; come what may he *must* be true to his religion.

It is easy to fancy the life of peril and excitement that Theodore Parker lived. But through all, the quieter duties of life were not forgotten, and by words and deeds he taught that a high ideal may glorify any work, however humble, and that a life unknown to the world may be made great and holy by gentleness and truth. So he had help and comfort to give the multitudes who flocked to him in the music hall from the weary ways and hidden paths of the city, while he was fighting with all his might the wickedness in the high places  
earth.

At the end of the year 1854, the

results of his struggle against slavery came upon him. He had broken the Fugitive Slave Laws, he had hidden slaves in his house, and he had helped many others to escape. 'He had spoken brave words against the law of the land whenever he had had a chance to do so. 'What shall I do,' he asked himself, 'if I am sent to gaol?' This was his reply,—'I will write one sermon a week, and have it read in the music hall, and printed next morning. But who shall read it?' Who could take his place, and win the hearing of 3,000 people? Yet his words must not fail to go forth, for now they were carried far and wide over America; and even across the ocean people learned the lessons that he taught each Sunday in the Boston music hall.

The evening before Thanksgiving Day he sat in his study. A stranger asked leave to speak to him, and was shown in.

'I have come to arrest you, Mr. Parker,' said the man, showing his warrant, and Theodore went with him through the streets of Boston to the court-house. His trial was fixed for the first Monday in April. Three bondsmen were easily found for him, and

meanwhile, for a few months, he was a free man. On the last night of that year, 1854, he wrote this prayer :—

‘Oh! thou Spirit who rulest the Universe, seeing the end from the beginning, I thank Thee for all opportunities of usefulness which Thou hast afforded, for all manifold delights which have clustered round my path. But how little have I grown, how little done! Inspire me to do more, to become nobler in the purpose and motive of my life. Help me to resist new temptations, and do the new duties which the year brings with it. I know not what a day may bring forth—bonds or shame—perhaps a gaol. Help me everywhere to be faithful to Thee, so may I love and serve my brethren more; yet still may I love my enemies, even as Thou sendest rain on the just and on the unjust.’

Spring came, and Theodore Parker’s trial was held in the court-house. But it did not proceed, for no case was proved against him.

‘Mr. Parker,’ said the Judge, ‘you have only crept through a knot hole.’ And Parker answered,—‘I’ll knock a bigger hole next time.’

But no such trial was ever held again in Boston, and another record stood for ever of a man who held firm to what was *right*, rather than to what was *worldly-wise* and *safe*.

Those days which called forth Theodore Parker's bravery are over, and probably the fierce civil war which followed them might have been spared if every man had been as true to the right as he was. Slaves are no longer bought and sold in America, or captured in the streets of Boston, and even the memory of such evil deeds may die away. But the fact remains, that there is always some battle to be fought for the right; and, whether old or young, we need in our lives the spirit that made Theodore Parker what he was, and would have made him true and noble, whatever his work had been.

For about three years longer he thus worked on, and wore life and strength away. Friends besought him to rest, but he only answered in such words as these,—‘I must work while it is day. God has entrusted me with certain powers, and I must use them for my fellow-men. I come of a long-lived stock, and hope with care to survive: but it matters little

whether I go through or go under, if I do my duty as I ought.'

At length strength failed, and journeys and lectures and other work must end, for he quite broke down. His illness was the signal for a fresh outbreak of wrath against his religious views, and meetings were held and sermons preached, and prayers offered against this Boston heretic. Theodore Parker was no longer the almost unknown young man he had been when he first roused the Boston world by the first sermon he preached in the city. Now his sermons were read by tens of thousands; his words were carried over the land, and he was the leader of reformers. But the lion at length lay powerless.

So, as he lay stricken down with hæmorrhage of the lungs, the Churches of Boston busied themselves against him and his heresies: but thousands of people mourned for him as their friend and helper; and messages and inquiries came crowding into his sick room. On January 2nd, 1859, he had preached for the last time in the music hall, and his subject had been, 'What Religion can do for a Man.' A week after, a short note was all he could send to

the people assembled in the Hall. The doctors gave little hope that his life could be spared. Another voyage to Europe was the last chance; and it was settled that in a month's time he should set sail, if his strength would permit. Meantime, farewell messages went in and out of the quiet room where he lay; and, among his last short notes, was one of thanks to Dr. Francis, for all the help he had received from him long years ago, when he was a friendless youth fighting the battle of life in Watertown.







## CHAPTER X.

### THE LAST VOYAGE.

**I**T was no mournful company that set sail with Theodore Parker in a few weeks' time. His wife, and three friends who went with him, could not despair while he was so full of hope and courage. As he lay on the deck of the steamer day after day, with only sea and sky around him as far as eye could reach, his thoughts went back over the past years which had by degrees led him into a life so full of work; and he longed to find strength for new duties ere he died. He often spoke of the poor people in Boston and the sad homes he had been used to visit, where illness and trouble were: but always he was serene and cheerful.

At length they landed at Santa Cruz, in the West Indies, and there he gained strength

enough to take walks, and enjoy the new scenes and flowers, and to write letters to the anxious friends at home. After this they visited England and France and Switzerland. For several weeks they made their home on the hill-side of Lake Geneva. Sunny meadows lay round them, and the gleaming lake below, while beyond its blue waters rose the distant snow-covered mountains, with their peaks cutting the summer clouds. The bracing air gave him new vigour, and there seemed sure ground for hope that he might go back to America strong and well.

But in August the cold winds began to blow, and it was needful to travel further South. So the little party went to Italy. In Rome old and new friends gathered round Theodore Parker, and he was the life of the circle. Suddenly, however, a change for the worse showed itself: the strength he had gained left him and he was as weak as he had been before he sailed from home. Swiftly the news spread to England and America, and there was wide-spread sorrow felt.

By slow degrees he was removed to Florence. For days as he lay in the beautiful city his

thoughts wandered away to his home and work. 'Come, Bearsie,' he said to his wife sometimes, 'let us go and see our friends.' Sometimes he would ask, 'When is the vessel going? Will it not go soon?' At other times everything was clear to him, and he knew then that the end was near. Sadly he said one morning to a friend, 'I am not afraid to die; but there is so much to do. I have had great powers given to me, and I have but half used them.' But one strange thought gave him comfort, and he told it in these words: 'There are two Theodore Parkers—one dying in Italy, and the other I have planted in America!'

Perhaps he did not know how true this saying was. The influence he had sown in America is bearing fruit to this day; and even we, who now read his story, may learn from him to try to be and do and say the very best we can. A great river can be traced back along its winding course to the tiny mountain brook from which it rose. So with a noble life; and as we look back over the story of Theodore Parker, we see in its beginning the figure of a boy by a sunny farmyard pond, listening to and obeying the *first* whisper of

conscience, and find there the original impulse from which his after greatness sprang.

The last day of his life drew near—the 10th of May, 1860. At times he sent loving messages to his far distant friends; leaving his wife for comfort to their tender care. His great library he bequeathed to the city of Boston—a free gift.

‘Lay down your head upon my pillow, Bearsie,’ he said to his wife, ‘for you have not slept for a long time.’ And so, with flowers about him, and filled with a great peace, Theodore Parker passed away.

THE END.



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